

Information, Advice & Advocacy Strategy (ASCH and PP)

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Foreword

Proportionate, accessible, accurate and consistent information, advice and advocacy, is fundamental to all people making well informed choices about their health and wellbeing, as well as how to meet and fund any care and support needs they may have. It has an important role in promoting self-management, supporting a strategic shift towards early intervention and prevention and underpins self-direction and the delivery of personal budgets.

The Care Act recognises that the local authority has a critical role in the provision of advice, information and advocacy and to this end places a duty on local authorities to be pro-active in the provision of information and advice provision for its residents. Importantly, the duty relates to the whole population of Nottinghamshire, not just those with care and support needs, or in some other way known to the system. It requires local authorities to pro-actively identify people with unmet needs and signpost to preventative and early intervention services. Information and advice must not only cover basic information about care and support, but must also address finances, health, housing, employment and what to do in cases of abuse or neglect.

Nottinghamshire County Council is also facing unprecedented budget reductions, alongside a predicted increase in demand for vital care and services of £37m over the next 3 years. The authority currently provides support and care for over 18,500 vulnerable adults and older people, and home care for 4,700 disabled and older people every year¹. It is therefore more important than ever, that the Council is pro-active in ensuring the right information and advice are available to people at the right time so that they can make informed choices about their own health and wellbeing and make best use of both public and personal money.

The provision of information, advice and advocacy needs to be delivered through models where there is evidence that they are effective, cost efficient and ensure people have access to appropriate and proportionate information at the right time. This will require different media approaches including digital, face to face and telephone. Although digital channels will be the main point of holding, maintaining and sharing information and advice, this information will be able to be accessed by anyone in different formats e.g. printed. The Council will also continue to provide information in different formats to respond to specific individual requirements.

Developing and implementing an Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy is a complex and on-going piece of work which requires a joint vision and commitment from many areas of the Council, both departmentally and corporately as well as from partner and external organisations. It is now timely to review the strategy in order to incorporate changing local and national requirements.

¹ NCC Budget Challenge 2013/14
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For the purpose of this strategy information, advice and advocacy are defined as follows:

Information – the open and accessible supply of material deemed to be of interest to a particular population. This can be either passively available or actively distributed.

Advice – offers guidance and direction on a particular course of actions which need to be undertaken in order to realise a need, access a service or realise individual entitlements.

Source: Margiotta et al 2003 Are You Listening (JRF)

Advocacy – aims to enable the voices of people, including the most excluded members of society, to be heard when decisions are being made about them or about the services that they need. The Council recognises that independent advocacy is an important service for the citizens of Nottinghamshire who are most likely to be excluded from society and least likely to have choice and control in their lives.

The definition of advocacy used in this document comes from the Advocacy Charter 2002. The charter has been endorsed by the Association of Directors of Social Services and is supported by Nottinghamshire County Council. The charter says,

“Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. Advocates and advocacy schemes work in partnership with the people they support and take their side. Advocacy promotes social inclusion, equality and social justice.”

The full charter can be seen at www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk

1. Context

‘Good quality information and advice will be available to all to help people plan for the future, reduce the need for care services and where possible maintain independence.’

Guiding Principle from the Model of Adult Social Care in Nottinghamshire.

1.1 The Care and Support Bill

The Care and Support Bill contains the following requirements regarding information and advice:

- (1) *A local authority must establish and maintain a service for providing people with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers.*
- (2) *The service must provide information and advice on the following matters in particular:*
 - (a) *the system provided for by this part and how the system operates in the authority’s area*
 - (b) *the choice of types of care and support, and the choice of providers available in the authority’s area*
 - (c) *how to access the care and support that is available*
 - (d) *how to raise concerns about the safety of an adult who has care and support needs.*

The Bill requires each Local Authority to secure robust information and advice provision for all its residents. There is a requirement to identify people who have social care needs (including self-funders) and ensure people are provided with comprehensive information and advice about services in their local area, which is appropriate and proportionate to their circumstances and needs. This includes providing a written statement on universal and preventative services to prevent or delay the need for social care support and information to make informed decisions about social care and support, including access to independent financial advice.

1.2 Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The strategy incorporates the following strategic principles, which are underpinned by the existence and accessibility of effective advice and information.

- a) Early intervention and prevention – investing earlier in care services to help prevent future problems
- b) Supporting independence – retain independence, improve own health and wellbeing and reduce the need for traditional services
- c) Promote integration across partners by providing strong leadership to join up services and deliver consistent messages on key issues.

1.3 NHS England Information Guidebook

NHS England's Accessible Information is a standard for NHS and social care organisations across England to record the information and communication support needs of disabled patients, service users and carers, and take action to ensure that those needs are met. It will be implemented through changes to IT and administrative systems to enable consistent recording of such needs. In acting upon recorded information and communication support needs, organisations will be required to provide personal correspondence (such as appointment letters) and patient information (such as leaflets) in alternative formats (such as Braille, 'easy read' or via email) and communication support for appointments (such as assistive technology or British Sign Language interpreters).

More information is available on their website www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo.

1.4 Nottinghamshire County Council 'Channel Shift'

The strategy should be considered along with the current corporate and departmental channel shift towards encouraging people to help themselves, rather than needing to ask someone where they can find the information they need. By providing information in a variety of ways we can speed up the process for both user and provider. Future web developments will enable users to complete e-forms, make appointments and payments online. The principles of Digital First are referenced in the NCC Digital Development Plan. www.gov.uk/designprinciples

1.5 Making it Real

The action plan for Think Local Act Personal, in which information and advice was a key area, led to the development of the e-marketplace resource.

1.6 The Adult Social Care Strategy

The [Adult Social Care Strategy](#) was approved by Full Council and is now available in the Policy Library on the public website. The strategy makes the following commitment: *“good quality information and advice will be available to all to help people plan for the future, reduce the need for care services and, where possible, maintain independence”*. The aim of the Information, Advice & Advocacy Strategy is to ensure that this commitment becomes a reality.

2. What does feedback and research tell us about how information and advice is provided currently and what people would like in the future?

2.1 NCC Digital Development Plan, 2013 - 2017

Increasing numbers of people (residents, employees and partners) want to complete transactions online wherever possible. Use of, and engagement with, digital channels have risen consistently so online is the 'channel of choice' for many.

National context:

- A recent study by the O2 Digital Community found almost half of residents surveyed would like to use the internet, social media or mobile apps to access council services - but only 7% had been able to do so in the last year due to availability from organisations
- More than half of the UK's 33 million registered Internet users (52% of population) are accessing social media on a daily basis
- 65% of the UK's active online population use Facebook every day
- 28% of the UK's active online population use Twitter every day
- The 45–54 year age bracket is the fastest growing demographic on both Facebook and Google+
- 93% of marketers use social media for business.

Local picture:

- 84% of Nottinghamshire's population has access to the internet
- The equivalent of 24% of Nottinghamshire's population accesses nottinghamshire.gov.uk each month
- Net satisfaction (number of satisfied visitors minus dissatisfied visitors) of visitors to the website is 37% - this compares with an average of 31% for other county councils
- 25% of visitors to www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk in July 2013 said their purpose was to carry out an online transaction
- 30% of visitors to nottinghamshire.gov.uk in the first half of 2013 were using a smartphone or tablet. This figure is expected to increase and has already doubled since the same period in 2012
- Data collected by the Council's channel shift programme details the cost of transacting with the Council as follows: £9.14 for face-to-face; £4.79 for telephone; £0.09p for online.

2.2 Adult Carers Survey 2012/13

In 2012, the Adult Carers' Survey was sent out to 803 carers. 419 completed questionnaires were received. Of those who responded, 66% of people who had said that they had tried to find information said that it was very easy or fairly easy to find. 34% said that it was fairly or very difficult to find. 88% of people who had received information and advice had found this very or quite helpful.

2.3 ²Dementia Café Survey 2014

A consultation was carried out in 2013 with dementia support groups across Nottinghamshire to establish what information (about services or support) people with dementia and their carers wanted and needed, plus where and how they might want to access that information. People placed great value on practical information particularly in the early stages post diagnosis.

Knowing who to ask and where to go for information about support or services was seen as a big problem, especially for carers. Support groups, voluntary sector and carers groups were seen as

² Personal Budgets and Dementia project – Feedback on consultation with people with dementia and carers Helen Turner 2014

important sources of information, while few used the Nottinghamshire County Council’s Customer Services Centre or knew about ‘Choose my Support’.

Outcomes

- Information needs along the dementia pathway have been mapped.
- CCG’s will develop simple signposting information sheets
- Information about services and supports to be made available earlier in the pathway - via CPN’s / GPs / Occupational Therapists
- Accessible Information leaflet on Personal Budgets and Direct Payments produced by NCC.
- Enhanced information role at the dementia cafes
- Dementia support activities and groups are on Choose My Support

2.4 Local Account

NCC Local Account is published annually and reflects the performance of ASCH and PP over the year taken from the Adult Social Care Survey. 74.5% of service users and carers questioned for the survey responded that they found it very or fairly easy to find information and advice. This compares well with the East Midlands as a whole where the figure was 71.5%. However this leaves over 25% of respondents who did not have such a good experience.

2.5 Information and Advice for Older People Evidence Review, Age UK 2012

This review, commissioned by Age UK, indicated that information and advice for older people is best provided through a range of channels and formats. For example, a combination of face-to-face and telephone presence might be preferable, supported by some form of written literature (to cater for those who prefer that format).

A Total Place Pilot³ report also stresses the need for a range of information for older people from a variety of providers:

“Providing information, advice and support in a way in which people need it, when they want it, clearly militates against the notion that any sort of single provider solutions will be effective.

The multiple, diverse contact points which individuals access clearly mean there is value in having cross sector principles for the provision of relevant information, advice and support for older people.”

The review goes on to say that older people want continuity of contact and a follow-up service, not to be simply referred to another potential source of information.

Multiple service providers ideally would be acting together, rather than in isolation. Older people often seek information at a point of change or crisis, and need timely and comprehensive information.

³ Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Total Place Pilot: Final report,

3. Current delivery mechanisms

3.1 NCC Website

The adult social care pages of the NCC website are currently being rewritten and restructured. The new content will be in a form designed to help people find information that is relevant to their current circumstances and will deliver the best outcome for them. It will signpost them to consider community based and preventative options, with links to more detailed information relevant to their search. Subject headings will be designed by user testing to ensure that people understand the language used.

3.2 Online information and e-marketplace resource

This is managed on a search site which enables people to research, source and purchase social care support services in the area. The current site, 'Choose My Support', contains comprehensive details of social care providers for all users and potential users and carers. There is information for both self-funders and personal budget holders using a 'marketplace' where providers can publicise their services free of charge. The long term aim is for the site to incorporate NottsInfo4You and the 50plus websites, bringing a wealth of information together in one site.

Options for the future?

Integrated information systems are now available through which information flows between searchable directories, online assessment and support planning tools, financial systems, and information content pages. This can take people into relevant sections as appropriate to their needs and avoid people and staff entering information more than once.

Flexible systems are able to use new technology as it is developed, for example, apps for mobile phones and tablets that enable local facilities that are accessible for people with disabilities to be searched for whilst out and about, along with directions of how to get there on an interactive map.

In preparing for the future, an assessment of the benefits and costs of having such systems will be considered.

3.3 Care Directory/Leaflets/fact sheets

The Care Directory is available in print or online and contains details of care homes in Nottinghamshire. Leaflets and fact sheets are available on the NCC website for downloading at the point of need. This approach ensures that they are quick to update and cheaper to produce. A Publications Directory and social care and hospital visiting packs are also available on line.

3.4 Customer Service Centre (CSC)

The public are encouraged to use the CSC number for any type of query initially, and this underlines the importance of CSC as the key provider of information and advice in the county. It is vital that all CSC staff dealing with Information and Advice enquiries have access to regular updates and support. Currently there is a first call resolution rate of 76% for all types of calls made to the centre.

Overall from October 2012 to September 2013, 62% of calls made regarding Adult Care Services were requesting information, advice or signposting. The **Adult Access Service** is based at CSC to offer a first point of contact for all adult social care enquiries. The service is resolving 42% of these queries without the need for further support.

There is a specialist **Benefits Advice Team** based in the Adult Access Service which provides advice, support, information and training to the Council and voluntary organisations on benefit matters.

A **Carers' Support Team** is also based within the Adult Access Service which provides quick access to information, advice and signposting for carers.

3.5 BEDS

The care homes beds system BEDS, provides details of all care homes in Nottinghamshire and allows the public to search for homes in the area they want. Care homes also use the system to highlight when self-funders take up accommodation. This information enables the Council to signpost people to financial advice, designed to help preserve their savings and assets for longer. The care homes web pages have been designed to make it as easy as possible for people to find the information they need.

The pages can be found at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/findacarehome

3.6 Paying For Care

The aims of this initiative are to ensure that self funders and their families can access specialist financial information and advice and can make informed choices about their care pathways and how they pay for their care. NCC works with the not-for-profit organisation, Paying For Care, who provide free information and advice to self funders, and if required, put them in contact with professionals if regulated financial advice or legal support is required. The cap on the cost of care contained in the Care Act will place a duty on the Council to track the amount self-funders pay up to the nationally capped limit, at which point the Council will become responsible for costs.

Further work is required to review current signposting points and access to independent financial advice alongside redesign of the new assessment and financial processes in line with the Care Act. The aim is to ensure the right amount of financial advice is available to people, including self-funders, at the right time.

3.7 Grant Aid services

NCC supports several voluntary advice and information giving organisations through Grant Aid. It is imperative that these organisations can access information easily and quickly in order to pass this onto to people coming to their services.

3.8 Customer Service Points

District councils provide face-to-face customer service advice about Nottinghamshire County Council services. Working in partnership offers customers a 'one stop' service for customers enquiring about local council, NHS and police services.

3.9 Advocacy Model in Nottinghamshire

'Your Voice, Your Choice' provides a single point of access to advocacy services. This service provides all NHS and local government services across the City and County together in one contract including NHS Complaints Advocacy or ICAS. The model provides Access to Advocacy (A2A) via a single point and telephone number which can be called via the CSC, or directly by members of the public, agencies or organisations. The triage process is undertaken remotely at a centre in Birmingham, which links to all their staff and services across the UK in a very effective way. Where a statutory service is required by practitioners, the model is designed to ensure that can be

undertaken directly with local teams as this may be linked to safeguarding processes or the use of statutory powers. The IMCA service supports Mental Capacity legislation, IMHA Mental Health Act. Paid Representatives and a DoLs (Deprivation of Liberty) service have evolved alongside IMHA.

Pohwer, acting as the Agent, deliver all statutory services except Paid Representatives. Age UK are Associate providers of Paid Representatives and specialist non statutory services supporting all service user groups. They have trained volunteers to help support and develop peer support networks that help increase wider community resilience and empower and promote self-help and self-advocacy which often links closely to networks offering information and advice. They have close links to a wide variety of organisations in the community and voluntary sector including Healthwatch. Their contract is led by NCC and monitored by all partner agencies to assure quality and accountability.

Further work is required to review current capacity, signposting points and access to advocacy alongside redesign of the new assessment support planning processes in line with the Care Act.

3.10 First Contact

The First Contact Signposting scheme aims to help older people to increase and maintain their independence through the use of a checklist which enables those aged 60 and above to access a range of preventative services through a single gateway. Staff from partner organisations are trained to complete the checklist when visiting an older person. The details are then passed to the Customer Service Centre for referral to appropriate services. NCC supports the scheme in partnership with health, district and borough councils and the Fire Service.

3.11 Community Outreach Advisors

The Community Outreach Service is a free and confidential service for people over 50 to help them to remain safe and independent in their own homes. The seven posts are funded by NCC and health and hosted by voluntary sector organisations in each district.

The advisor will usually visit the person at home to assess their situation and needs. They can then offer advice and information on a range of topics such as home safety and security, home adaptations, mobility aids, transport, social activities and benefits.

Referrals to the service can come from individuals, family, carers, or professionals such as GPs.

3.12 Information, Advice and Support for Carers

Currently NCC commissions a Carers' Universal Service, an Information and Support Service for carers of people with a learning disability and a separate Engagement service.

The services are being redesigned, which includes exploring the benefits of combining them. It is anticipated that the new service will be tendered in Autumn 2014.

3.13 Access to information on local accessible and adaptable accommodation to enhance the housing choices of older and disabled people

District and Borough Councils all have customer contact numbers to provide current information about all types of housing. The NCC website gives information about Extra Care housing provision and details of care homes for older people thinking about alternative types of accommodation.

4. Our strategy for Information and Advice

The vision for information and advice provision is based on having one online place that individuals, as well as staff who may support them, can go to for information. This may signpost them to other places or to specialist face-to-face advisors. Up-dating information in one place is more economically efficient, likely to deliver up-to-date quality information, as well as offering better access to information for individuals.

When providing information and advice we need to take a holistic view of the lives of individuals and ensure that partners are pro-active in opening up points for information through partnerships that are appropriate to people's needs and circumstances. It needs to deliver content that flows across traditional public sector boundaries, wherever and by whomever it is delivered, so that customers experience streamlined access to information and advice that is relevant and helpful to their current situation.

Initial assessment of current information, advice and advocacy services against the Care Act indicates that we are well placed to meet these extended and new responsibilities. An assessment of the impact of the Care Act against the current position will inform the action plan and future strategy. There is however, immediate scope for improvement to develop a clear, streamlined information pathway, make it easier for people to go to one place first, and reduce duplication of information directories and sites. This work will be undertaken, based on need, evidence of models that work and cost effectiveness. There is also further work to review current signposting and access to independent financial advice, to ensure this is available to people, including self-funders, at the right time within the new assessment and financial processes developed as part of implementing the Care Act.

The direction of travel described nationally in the Care Act, and locally in the Digital Development Plan, encourages people to help themselves where possible. The 3-tier model at 5.3 demonstrates the information available universally, moving upwards where people are more vulnerable and requiring targeted support and services. There is a requirement to develop pathways to assist people and staff to navigate through this model ensuring the most efficient and cost effective use of restricted resources.

In order for people to be able to find information about services in their local area, the Council needs to assure that the information is up to date. This means the work underway to manage and update websites and other associated information, such as, fact sheets, leaflets, policies, information directories and scripts at the Customer Service Centre, must continue. Governance of the strategy and associated work sits within the established 'Access to Good Information Group' chaired by the Group Manager, Strategic Commissioning and reporting into the Adult Social Care, health and Public Protection Senior Leadership Team.

"Having a website is.....like having a farm.....A website can live and grow, provided it is well thought out to begin with and then well managed.....It will flourish if it is used and refreshed and fertilized with new information and ideas..... If the links are not checked regularly they may no longer work, they "rot". The site withers and dies".

Source: Chambers desk top guides for writing for the web, page 15.

4.1 Principles underpinning the strategy include:

- Information and advice will be **proportionate, accurate and consistent**
- There will be support for people's involvement in their assessment, care and support planning and review process through the provision of **advocacy services**
- Online and **electronic universal information** will be the main way of maintaining and sharing information. It will be able to be used in different formats e.g. printed, text to speech.
- Face-to-face facilitation and **support** will be available to people who require it and also to pro-actively target people who are likely to be at a point in life to most benefit from it
- The provision of information and advice will be **tailored to meet specific needs** where necessary,
- The **communication channels will be appropriate** to the needs of different adult groups
- All communications will meet **plain English** requirements
- Access to information and advice will include **signposts to other sources** where appropriate to ensure better connectivity between local and national systems
- Working in **partnership** with wider public and local advice and information providers is essential to achieve better outcomes for people

4.2 What we need to achieve

a) For the public

- The public can **easily find information** on services and financial information from one place online and via assisted services at the appropriate time
- Information is **open and transparent** and customers are able to make informed decisions on service choice and influence future services
- There is a **single point of access for information** via telephone, online and face to face
- Information is also in **alternative formats** for those that need it.

b) For staff

- Information management principles and practices to be embedded in the organisation through **training, culture and effective system design; e.g.** how calls to the CSC are dealt with
- It is **easy to find** the information in our electronic system
- There is a **single point of access** for information.

c) For our partners including providers

- Staff from different agencies can access and use the same social care information
- We ensure that our **partners are kept up to date** with our services on a regular basis
- We share information to deliver a **more streamlined service** to the public and improve their outcomes
- We **share information with partners** in order to plan services and organisations to deliver new services
- We share information in order to **work cost effectively**.

d) Information quality standards

- Information is **fit for purpose**. It is **accurate and reliable**.
- Information is delivered in a way that is **accessible, and in different forms**, which may be electronic, by phone, written or oral.
- Information is owned and managed by a **defined asset owner** who is responsible for its management.

- Information is **stored and managed in one place** not duplicated in different locations or systems.
- Information is **deleted when there is no longer a need for it**, but retained for legal or business reasons according to retention and disposal policies within an agreed archiving policy.

e) **Market management and value for money**

- **High quality, well-structured, universal information resources** such as a web-based social care directory, will enable providers to publicise their products and services and develop provision in line with local need. It will also reduce duplications and provide information on gaps in delivery, the outcome of which will be more efficient service provision.
- Information is managed in a **cost effective** way
- All delivery methods will be **monitored and evaluated** for effectiveness.

4.3 Three tier model of access to information provision by NCC ASCH and PP

